

How to train your Nation

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Category: Hetalia - Axis Powers, How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Adventure, Humor

Language: English

Characters: Denmark, Scotland, Sealand

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2013-06-11 01:32:44

Updated: 2013-06-24 02:18:09

Packaged: 2016-04-26 15:18:15

Rating: K+

Chapters: 4

Words: 9,234

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Hetalia crossed over with the film How to train your Dragon
Sealand longs to be a true Viking and a dragon killer, but can he
face his dream or will the young boy become something more?

Disclaimer; I own neither Hetalia or How to train your
Dragon

1. Chapter 1

****How to train your Nation****

****Chapter 1****

It was just before dawn on the island of Berk when Peter was jolted awake by a loud roar from outside. Hastily throwing his clothes on, the youngster raced down from his room and to the front door. Opening it with some caution, he saw a Monstrous Nightmare hovering in pursuit of some of the locals. Catching sight of the boy, the dragon spewed fire at him, prompting him to slam the heavy wooden door shut. He gasped in both wonder and horror.

"Dragons!"

Opening the door again and making a run for the smithy, he saw the chaos erupt in the predawn light as humans and dragons fought viciously over the village's livestock. As he made his way through the throngs of violence, many of the villagers yelled at him to get inside and under cover. Just as he was about to run into the smithy, his feet left the ground as he was picked up effortlessly by a tall, red-haired man.

"WHAT is he doing out again?!"

Turning to the boy, oblivious to the dragon spewing fire not six feet away, he repeated the question.

"What are you doing out? Get inside!"

Dropping the boy, the man seized a piece of wood nearby and hurled it like a javelin at a Deadly Nadder nearby trying to make off with an entire net of fish. Screeching, the dragon dropped the net and flew off lopsidedly. Nodding in satisfaction, the man turned to another nearby.

"What've we got?"

The armoured man responded quickly.

"Nadders, Gronkles, Zipplebacks, and Berwald saw a Monstrous Nightmare."

"Any Night Furies?"

"None so far."

"Good."

The village became a hive of activity as the dragons tried to get every piece of food they could find. Two giant bowls were lit and raised up, to illuminate the dragons flying overhead. Peter reached the smithy and hastily tied on an apron as he entered.

"Ah, nice of you to join the party. I thought you'd been carried off."

Mathias was the village blacksmith, and had lost his left arm and right leg in the long running war against the dragons. He hammered away at a red hot sword, grinning at Peter. The scrawny youngster lifted up a heavy war hammer.

"Who, me? I've got a body of steel! They wouldn't know what to do with all of... this!"

Mathias wiped his brow as he hammered away at the sword.

"Well, they need toothpicks, don't they?"

Peter worked the bellows as various villagers came to the blacksmith with broken or damaged weapons, alternating between trying to repair the old ones and dishing out new ones. He'd been put in the blacksmith ever since he was small. Outside, the fighting escalated. A Monstrous Nightmare scaled one of the higher mounted catapults and snapped at the men operating it. Casually picking up his war hammer, the red-haired man belted the snarling dragon around the snout, driving it off. Then came the shrieking sound many of the villagers had come to associate with doom itself.

"Night Fury!"

A bluish explosion blossomed against the supports holding the catapult up. Almost too quick to see, a black shadow shot past at supersonic speeds. Peter's eyes widened in awe. It had long been his dream to become the first viking ever to bring down a Night Fury. Just as he made to exit the smithy, he was effortlessly lifted up by Mathias.

"Oh come on, let me out, please, I need to make my mark."

The blond Dane was unfazed by the youngster's pleas.

"Oh you'd make plenty of marks, all in the wrong places!"

"Five minutes please, I'll kill a dragon, my life will get infinitely better! I might even get a date!"

"You can't lift an axe, you can't swing a hammer, you can't even throw one of these!"

He lifted up a bola, which was promptly snatched out of his hand by a viking behind him and hurled at an escaping Gronkle. The dragon gave a yelp as its' wings were pinned to its body and it fell. Peter backed into an emptier part of the smithy.

"No, but this will throw it for me!"

He patted a weapon he'd been working on for some time. Unexpectedly, it sprang open and flung a hammer right at an unsuspecting viking's head. Mathias looked at the man and then stormed towards his apprentice.

"Now, you see, this right here is what I'm talking about!"

Peter stammered as he collapsed the weapon again.

"It just needs a mild calibration and..."

Mathias cut off the babbling teen.

"Peter, Peter. If you're ever going to get out there and fight dragons, you need to stop all of... this."

He gestured to the boy with both his artificial hand and his natural one. Peter looked down in bemusement.

"But you just gestured to all of me!"

Mathias poked him in the chest.

"Yes. Stop being all of you."

Peter drew himself up to the unimpressed blacksmith.

"You, sir, are playing a dangerous game. Keeping this much... raw, vikingness contained... There will be consequences!"

"I'll take my chances. Sword, sharpened, now."

He dropped a blunted sword into the teens' arms. Peter glumly worked the whetstone as outside, the five other teens his age ran around putting out fires. He murmured to himself that he'd make a difference when the Night Fury zipped past again and finished off the catapult it had attacked earlier. Detaching his hammer, Mathias attached an axe in its' place.

"Man the fort, Peter. They need me out there."

He walked to the door and then pointed at the silent teen.

"Stay. Put. There. You know what I mean."

He gave a war cry and charged out into the bedlam. Seizing his chance, Peter wheeled his invention out onto a low cliff overlooking the sea despite various warnings to get under cover. Opening the ballista up, he pulled back the strings, this time making sure it was loaded with a heavy bola. It was almost peaceful on the edge of the village. A lone catapult stood unattended nearby. Peter looked around at the starry sky, muttering to himself.

"Come on. Give me something to shoot at, give me something to shoot at."

As if in response to his muttered plea, a bluish bolt exploded against the catapult nearby, illuminating the dark sky with fire. Peter caught a brief glimpse of the silhouette of a dragon unlike any he'd ever seen before twisting his ballista ahead of where the dragon would be and firing. The recoil knocked the youngster off his feet, but his aim had been true. With an anguished screech, the dragon fell from the sky, bound in the heavy bola. Peter's eyes widened.

"Oh did I hit it? YES I hit it! Did anybody see that?!"

Unseen by the boy, a Monstrous Nightmare crushed his ballista, eyes narrowed in menace. Peter turned back as he heard the crunch of wood.

"Except for you."

Rearing back, the dragon lunged for the nimble, scrawny teen. Screaming, he ran for his life as the Nightmare's almost liquid fire gushed at him. Scurrying for cover behind one of the immense posts that held one of the two bonfires aloft, he winced as fire sprayed either side of him. Cautiously looking to his right, he didn't see the dragon approaching from the left until the red-haired man tackled it viciously. Snarling, the Nightmare made to roast the viking alive, only to realise it had expended most of its' fire trying to kill Peter. Giving a whine, the dragon nonetheless sized up its' opponent.

"You're all out."

Charging the vicious dragon, the red-haired man dealt it a series of heavy blows, forcing it to retreat. Taking to the air, the dragon fled. Turning to the burning pole, the man saw it snap and send the enormous bowl of burning wood rolling straight for a band of vikings trying desperately to prevent a group of Nadders making off with a dozen sheep. Forced to jump aside from the rolling bowl of fire, the Nadders seized the chance and flew up with the sheep. All around them, the dragons were retreating, carrying almost half of the villager's livestock with them. Peter squirmed under the man's gaze.

"Sorry, dad."

Every villager around looked at the blundering young viking.

"Ok, but I hit a Night Fury."

Peter winced as he was grabbed and hauled off.

"It's not like the last few times, dad, I really actually hit it. You guys were busy and I had a very clear shot, it went down just off Raven Point. Lets get a search party out there and..."

Peter's father Hamish cut across his son's babbling explanations.

"STOP! Just, stop. Every time you step outside, disaster follows. Can you not see I have bigger things to worry about? Winter is almost here, and I have an entire village to feed!"

Peter glanced around at the assembled vikings.

"Well, between you and me, the village could use a little _less_ feeding, don't you think?"

Hamish did not look impressed.

"This isn't a joke, Peter! Why can't you follow the simplest orders?"

"I, I can't stop myself, Dad. I see a dragon and I just have to... kill it. It's who I am, Dad."

Hamish sighed wearily.

"You're... many things, Peter. But a dragon killer is NOT one of them. Get back to the house."

Hamish turned to address Mathias.

"Make sure he gets there. I have his mess to clean up."

Mathias nudged Peter forward. The five other teens wore looks of exasperation and, in some cases, mockery. Lovino spoke up first, followed by Gilbert.

"Quite the performance!"

"I've never seen anyone screw up that badly! That _helped_!"

Peter sighed as he walked past.

"Thank you, I was trying to..."

Mathias shoved Gilbert aside as he walked Peter home. By now, it was sunrise. Peter tried vainly to convince the blacksmith of what had happened.

"I really did hit one."

"Uh huh, sure."

"He never listens..."

"No, it runs in the family."

"And when he does, it's always with this... disappointed scowl, like someone skimped on the meat in his sandwich. 'Excuse me, barmaid. I'm afraid you brought me the wrong offspring! I ordered an extra large boy with beefy arms, extra guts and glory on the side! This here, this is a talking fish bone'!"

Mathias broke a laugh as they reached Peter's house.

"No, no, you're thinking about this all wrong. It's not so much what you look like. It's what's _inside_ that he can't stand."

Peter gave Mathias an unimpressed look.

"Thank you for summing that up for me."

He turned to go inside when Mathias spoke again.

"Look, the point is, stop trying so hard to be something you're not."

Peter looked on the verge of tears as he pushed the door open.

"I just want to be one of you guys."

He walked in and closed the door behind him. Mathias sighed, shaking his head as he turned to go. Unseen, Peter slipped out of a back door to begin his search for the downed dragon.

Later on in the day, Hamish was trying to muster the village to conduct another search for the dragon's nest.

"Either we finish them or they'll finish us! It's the only way we'll be rid of them. If we find the nest and destroy it, the dragons will leave. They'll go find another home. One more search, before the ice sets in."

Berwald spoke up from the crowd.

"Th'se ships ne'er c'me back."

Hamish countered the dissenting viking.

"We're _vikings;_ it's an occupational hazard! Now who's with me?"

There was a distinct silence among the vikings assembled in the Great Hall. Hamish pressed on regardless.

"Alright. Those who stay can look after Peter."

Immediately, there was a sea of raised hands. Mathias drained his tankard of ale and grinned.

"Right, I'll pack my undies."

Hamish shook his head as the other vikings filed out to ready their longboats.

"No, I need you to stay and train some new recruits."

Refilling his tankard, Mathias rolled his eyes.

"Oh, and while I'm busy, Peter can cover the stall. Molten steel, razor sharp weapons, lots of time to himself, what could possibly go wrong?"

Hamish sat next to his long time friend and sighed heavily.

"What am I gonna do with him, Mathias?"

Mathias looked serious as he spoke up.

"Put him in training with the others."

"I'm serious!"

"So am I."

Hamish threw his hands up in the air in despair.

"He'd be killed before you let the first dragon out of its' cage!"

"You don't know that."

"I do, I do."

"No, you don't!"

Hamish got up and began pacing around.

"When I was a boy, my father told me to bash my head against a rock and I did it. I thought it was crazy, but I didn't question him. And do you know what happened? That rock split in two. It taught me what a viking can do, Mathias, he can crush mountains, level forests, tame seas! Even as a boy I knew what I was, what I had to become. Peter is not that boy."

Mathias pressed on valiantly.

"You can't stop him, Hamish, you can only prepare him. I know it seems hopeless, but the truth is you won't always be there to protect him. He's going to get out there again, he's probably out there now."

Hamish sighed as he thought deeply on the matter.

Author's note

I couldn't find perfect matches for everyone, so here's who's who in this fic

Hiccup - Sealand/Peter

Astrid - Hungary/Elizabeta

Stoick the Vast - Scotland/Hamish

Gobber - Denmark/Mathias

Fishlegs - Lithuania/Toris

Snotlout - Prussia/Gilbert

Roughnut - Belarus/Natalia

Toughnut - South Italy/Lovino

Random vikings - Sweden/Berwald, Finland/Tino, England/Arthur, Canada/Matthew

The dragons will remain as they were in the film, since only Toothless got any real character development

2. Chapter 2

****How to train your Nation****

****Chapter 2****

Birds flew through the forests of Berk. Despite being so far north, the brief growing season could be almost tropical compared to the rest of the year, although the peak of the island was always coated in ice and snow. The air smelled fresh and clear as Peter stood in the forest, a pencil with a charcoal tip in one hand and a rough sketchbook in the other. Marked on a rough map was the location of the village and an estimated landing spot for the Night Fury he'd shot at that very morning. Marked around were various spots he'd checked for the dragon. Trying to guess another spot, Peter gave into frustration, scribbled on his map and slammed the book shut, tucking it away inside his fur jacket with an exasperated sigh.

"Oh, the gods hate me."

He walked towards a cove he knew of, his bad mood getting worse as he left the estimated range of where the dragon had crashed. Despite knowing he was alone he continued his rant.

"Some people lose their knife, their mug, maybe even their title. No, not me, I managed to lose an entire dragon!"

He swung clumsily at a branch in his way, wincing when it hit him just above his right eye. Something about it caught his attention and he looked up. The tree the branch was attached to was broken almost straight down the middle, as if something big had hit it at high speed from the air. Peter examined a trench gouged in the earth, hardly daring to believe what he was seeing. He followed the trench down to where it ended over a short drop nearby and ducked out of sight upon seeing something large nearby. Gasping in disbelief he looked over the edge. Immobilised by several large bola was a jet black dragon. Peter climbed down, amazed that he had succeeded.

"No way, I... I did it! Oh, this fixes everything!"

He walked up to the dragon and placed a foot on its foreleg triumphantly.

"Yes! I have brought down this mighty beast!"

A dull growl, followed by a light shove brought the youth back to reality. Alerted to the fact the dragon was not dead, Peter approached it more cautiously. Breathing heavily now it had regained consciousness, the dragon opened its' light green, catlike eyes, staring at the young viking. Peter hastily drew his dagger, his breath becoming rapid. The dragon didn't do anything beyond study its' unexpected visitor. Peter scowled as he straightened up, dagger in hand.

"I'm gonna kill you, dragon. I'm... I'm gonna cut out your heart and take it to my father. I'm a viking. I AM A VIKING!"

He raised his dagger for the killing stab, screwing his eyes shut. The dragon made an oddly mournful noise and continued to look at the young viking. Peter looked at the helpless creature before him and saw fear in its' eyes. The dragon closed its' eyes, resigned to its' fate. Peter willed himself to kill the dragon but couldn't do it; something about the dragon struck a chord with the aspiring viking. He lowered the dagger, breathing hard. He studied the bound dragon in dejection.

"I did this."

He turned to go, but paused in mid step. Despite being mortal enemies, he felt compelled to spare the jet black dragon. Screwing his eyes shut, he returned to the dragon's side and used his dagger to cut the ropes. Astonished to say the least, the dragon opened its' eyes again as Peter freed him. Once he regained his freedom, the dragon pounced on Peter as if he were a mouse. Pinned down by the dragon's scaly foot, Peter gasped for air. He looked up in terror at the dragon's fanged maw and glaring eyes. Growling deeply in its throat, the dragon studied its' captive with ferocious intensity. Peter tried to wriggle but couldn't move at all. Rearing back slightly, the dragon's jaws parted as if to begin to eat. Peter silently braced himself for the worst. Stamping its right foreleg into the ground, the dragon roared at the terrified viking youth and leapt into the trees around them. Peter gasped for air at the realisation he had not only brought down a Night Fury, but he'd had the chance to kill it and had not, and the creature had, in turn, spared his life. He stumbled to his feet as the dragon tried to fly off, away from Berk. Its' shrill roars filled the woods as it flew ever lower, into a cove Peter had seen many times before. Turning to return to the village, the young viking fainted in a mixture of shock, relief, terror and awe.

Sunset had fallen over the island by the time Peter regained his senses. He could no longer hear the Night Fury and assumed it had left the island following him sparing it. He trudged back home, his mind a jumbled mess of emotions, ranging from what would have happened had he killed the dragon whilst it was helpless to a brief fantasy about flying himself. By the time the village came into sight it was completely dark. Clouds obscured the stars from sight as he opened the front door of his home and tried to scuttle in unseen. Hamish spoke up as his son tried to climb the stairs.

"Peter."

Peter froze, wondering how he'd ever explain what had happened in the forests to his father.

"Dad."

He blew out a long sigh and resigned himself for the worst.

"I... need to talk to you, Dad."

Hamish looked unusually uncomfortable as he looked at his son.

"I need to speak with you too, son."

Both started talking at the exact same time.

"I've decided I don't want to fight dragons."

"I think it's time you learned to fight dragons."

Father and son made eye contact.

"What?"

Hamish gestured to his son.

"Um, you were first."

Peter half shrugged as he sat on the stairs.

"No, you go first."

Hamish clasped his hands together.

"Alright. You get your wish. Dragon training. And you start in the morning."

Peter got up immediately.

"Oh man, I should've gone first. Because, I was thinking, we have a surplus of dragon fighting vikings, but, do we have enough bread making vikings, or small home repair..."

He was cut off as Hamish pushed an axe into his grip.

"You'll need this."

Peter tried valiantly to get a word in.

"I don't wanna fight dragons."

Hamish chuckled at his son's refusal.

"Oh come on, yes you do!"

"Rephrase; Dad, I can't kill dragons."

He briefly considered telling his father of his encounter in the woods with the Night Fury, and how he'd refused to kill the helpless dragon, but decided against it. Hamish spoke up again.

"But you will kill dragons!"

"No, I'm really very extra sure that I won't."

"It's time, Peter."

"Can you not hear me?!"

"This, is _serious_, son! When you carry this axe, you carry all of us with you. Which means you walk like us. You talk like us. You think like us. No more of, _this_."

He gestured broadly to Peter's scrawny frame. Peter frowned in response.

"You just gestured to all of me."

"Deal?"

"This conversation is feeling very one-sided."

"Deal?!"

Peter sighed, realising he wouldn't get his father to listen in his present mood, and responded in a meek, tired tone.

"Deal."

Hamish straightened up and nodded, taking hold of a basket laden with food and weapons and reaching for his helmet.

"Good. Train hard. I'll be back. Probably."

Peter stood still as his father walked out, feeling worn out from the day's events and his father's stubborn streak.

"And I'll be here. Maybe."

3. Chapter 3

****How to train your Nation****

****Chapter 3****

It was a mild morning as Peter got up, alone at home now that most of the adults had gone on their last search for the dragon's nest. No attacks had happened in the night, to the relief of many of the remaining villagers. Peter hauled himself out of bed and began to search for something to eat. Briefly he wondered if the Night Fury would hunt him down after letting it go yesterday, but he soon managed to push such worries aside as he ate part of a dried piece of fish. He took the time to bathe and change after eating, silently reasoning to himself that he may have a better time avoiding the dragons if he didn't stink enough to offend them. Hastily grabbing his axe, he made his way to the arena where the training would take place. Already the other five teens were there as Mathias threw the gate open.

"Welcome to dragon training!"

Taking a deep breath, Elizabeta broke the silence.

"No turning back."

The five teens walked into the large arena and looked around, Elizabeta in the lead. Gilbert, Natalia and Lovino all looked to take it in their stride, but Toris looked nervous. Taking a firm grip on his double ended spear, Lovino gave his weapon a shake and smirked confidently.

"I hope I get some _serious_ burns!"

Natalia also spoke up.

"I'm hoping for some mauling, like, on my shoulder or lower back."

Elizabeta silently dubbed her comrades as crazy but threw in her own comment anyway.

"Yeah, it's only good if you get a scar out of it."

"Yeah, no kidding, right?"

The five teens turned to see Peter walking in slowly, looking less than enthusiastic.

"Pain. Love it."

Lovino scowled, a look soon echoed by his twin sister.

"Oh great, who let _him_ in?"

Mathias ushered all six teens forward.

"Lets get started! The recruit who does best will win the honour of killing their first dragon in front of the entire village."

Gilbert gave Peter a condescending look.

"Peter already killed a Night Fury, so does that disqualify him or what? Can I train in a class with more cool vikings?"

The other teens, even Toris, laughed at Gilbert's comment. Mathias patted Peter heavily on his shoulder, making the scrawny viking youth stumble.

"Don't worry, you're small and weak. That'll make you less of a target. They'll see you as sick or insane or something and go after the more viking-like teens instead."

Chuckling, he clapped the gloomy teen on the head and stood in front of the teenagers, his back to five heavy iron and wooden doors.

"Behind these doors are a few of the many species you will learn to fight. The Deadly Nadder..."

Toris began to recite what he knew of the dragons as Mathias spoke.

"Speed 8, armour 16."

"The Hideous Zippleback..."

"Plus 11 stealth times 2."

"The Monstrous Nightmare..."

"Firepower 15."

"The Terrible Terror..."

"Attack 8, venom 12."

Mathias glared at Toris.

"CAN YOU STOP THAT?!"

Toris recoiled upon being yelled at. Mathias placed his hand on a lever by the final cage.

"And, the Gronckle."

Toris spoke to Peter in a low voice.

"Jaw strength 8."

Peter looked back in some surprise. Gilbert started as Mathias made to open the cage.

"Whoa, whoa, wait, aren't you going to teach us first?"

Mathias smiled at the six teens.

"I believe in learning on the job."

He pushed the lever down and the doors opened, revealing a bulbous, almost doglike dragon with short wings. It flapped its wings so fast they were like a blur, and flew at the teens. Mathias continued to speak as the Gronckle flew past the teens and hit the wall.

"Today is about survival. If you get blasted, you're dead."

Peter gulped as they scattered from the dragon. Taking advantage of the fact no-one was racing to meet it head to head, the Gronckle gulped down some nearby rocks and started to get back in the air.

"Quick; what's the first thing you're going to need?"

Peter looked around in alarm.

"A body of steel?"

"Plus 5 speed?!"

Elizabeta spoke up.

"A shield."

Mathias nodded and pointed to a pile of shields nearby.

"A shield. Go!"

The six teens ran for the shields. Toris, Elizabeta and Gilbert all grabbed a shield with no fuss, but Peter was having some trouble lifting his, and Lovino and Natalia were arguing over who got to take the one they'd both grabbed. Mathias walked over to Peter as he continued to teach the viking youths.

"Your most important piece of equipment is your shield. If you have to make a choice between a sword or a shield, take the shield."

He lifted Peter's shield up effortlessly, pushed it into the teen's hands and then knocked the reluctant teen forward. Meanwhile, Natalia and Lovino were still arguing.

"Get your hands off my shield! There's like a hundred shields!"

"This one has a tomato on it; it's mine! Take that one, it has a flower on it, girls like flowers."

Unimpressed by her twin, Natalia wrenched the shield out of Lovino's grip and hit him over the head with it.

"Oops! Now this one has two tomatoes on it!"

Unseen by either twin, the Gronckle flew to a few metres away and launched a fireball in between the twins, destroying the shield. Both were knocked to the floor, spinning. Mathias called out.

"Lovino, Natalia, you're out!"

Both twins looked confused as the dragon turned its' attention to the other four teens. Mathias carried on with his tutoring.

"Those shields are good for defence, but also for noise. Make lots of it, to throw off a dragon's aim."

Gilbert, Toris, Elizabeta and Peter all began to clang on their shields with their various weapons. Sure enough, the hovering Gronckle began to look dizzy and confused. The four began to circle the dragon, clanging on their shields as they did so.

"Every dragon has a limited number of shots. How many does a Gronckle have?"

Peter, Gilbert and Toris all shouted out a number.

"Three?"

"Five?"

"Six!"

Mathias grinned.

"Correct, six! That's one for each of you!"

The Gronckle took advantage of the pause and shot a fireball at Toris's shield, destroying it. It aimed another shot at Peter as he ducked behind a barricade but missed. Toris ran aside as Gilbert began a vain attempt to flatter Elizabeta.

"So anyway, I've got an awesome hideout in my parent's home, it's amazing! You should come by some time to work out. You look like you work out."

Diving aside, Elizabeta dodged the next fireball, which blew apart Gilbert's shield and sent the bragging teen to the ground. Peter looked at Elizabeta in an awkward mix of admiration and trepidation.

"So I guess it's just, me and you?"

"Nope. Just you."

She jumped aside nimbly as the Gronckle fired again, destroying Peter's axe and knocking the shield out of his grip. Remembering what Mathias said about the shield's importance, Peter gave chase as it rolled away, pursued by the hovering dragon.

"One shot left. Peter!"

Cornered against a door, Peter found himself face to face with the dragon. He panted as the dragon seemed to consider him before opening its mouth to finish him off. Mathias raced over and used his artificial arm, today with a hook in it, to tug the Gronckle aside a mere second before it fired, missing Peter and hitting the wall instead.

"And that's six. Go back to bed, ya overgrown sausage!"

He wrestled the dragon back into its' cage and locked the door. Helping Peter to his feet he spoke to the six teens.

"You'll get another chance, don't you worry. Remember, a dragon will always, and I mean always, go for the kill."

Peter looked at the still burning embers of the Gronckle's shot as the others walked out of the arena. Despite what Mathias had said he felt curious about the previous day's encounter, and he made his way out of the arena and into the forest, musing to himself that maybe the Night Fury was different somehow. He came to the spot where he'd found the jet black dragon and gave voice to his thoughts.

"A dragon will always go for the kill. So why didn't you?"

He picked up the discarded rope and attached stone, wondering what had prompted the Night Fury to spare him. He wandered down towards the sheltered pool, ducking under tree roots as he looked around. It was very peaceful, and a quartet of bright yellow birds flew past, chirping merrily. He couldn't make any sense of why he'd been spared and spoke up.

"Well this is stupid."

Something small and black caught his eye, and he knelt down to pick

up a small, rounded, roughly triangular scale. Undoubtedly it was off the Night Fury itself. He touched it to feel what it was like when abruptly a black shape leapt up towards him. Surprisingly, the dragon was still there. Peter watched in fascinated interest as the dragon scrambled to get a hold on the smooth rocks that formed the cove's walls. Failing, it gave a short cry and glided over to the other side of the pool, landing awkwardly on the ground. Deciding to watch the dragon for a while, he scrambled onto a larger rock as it tried to take off again. Initially it seemed to be doing well, but then its' tail moved erratically and the dragon clumsily fell to the ground, although it managed to land easily. Leaping straight upwards, it tried again to scale the rocky walls but couldn't. Remembering he'd brought his sketchbook with him, he took it out and began a rough sketch of the dragon, his fear replaced with curiosity.

"Why don't you just fly away?"

The dragon shot a blue bolt into the ground in frustration, and then Peter noticed something odd about the dragon. Its tail was lopsided, and the left part of its' tail fin was missing. He corrected his drawing and watched as the dragon tried once again to fly, crashing near the pond in the cove. This time it made no proper effort to get up again but was suddenly distracted by a jumping fish. Walking closer to the water, the dragon snapped twice at nearby fish but failed to catch any. Peter examined his drawing and put his pencil down, but it rolled off the stone he was sat on. It fell into the cove, catching the attention of the Night Fury. Looking up, it locked gazes with the teen. Peter immediately felt somewhat nervous, but the dragon didn't do anything beyond growl in its' throat. When he moved, it moved, but it made no effort to attack. Deciding not to push his luck, Peter retreated from the cove, watched all the time by the downed Night Fury. It was late in the day, and the humid smell of a storm wafted through the forest. Unspurred by the approaching deluge, Peter walked slowly back to the village, getting wet as the rain began in earnest. As Peter entered the Great Hall, he could see the other five teens there. Mathias was there too, doling out comments on their performance in the arena that day.

"Where did Elizabeta go wrong today?"

Elizabeta spoke up as Peter entered the hall, wet and cold from his walk back from the cove.

"I mistimed my somersault dive. It was sloppy, I ruined it."

Gilbert spoke up.

"No, that was awesome, so like you, so... Elizabeta."

She rolled her eyes and returned her attention to her food. Mathias spoke up.

"She's right. You have to be tough on yourselves. Where did Peter go wrong?"

Lovino and Natalia chimed in.

"Umm, he showed up?"

"He didn't get eaten?"

Elizabeta looked at the scrawny viking teen.

"He's never where he should be."

Mathias didn't pay Peter any real attention as he took his food and sat down on a different table by himself.

"Thank you, Elizabeta. You have to live and breathe this stuff."

He produced a large book from under the table.

"The dragon manual. Everything we know about every dragon we know of is in this book."

Unseen by the others, Peter's eyes widened. Hopefully something in the book could tell him about the Night Fury. From outside came a dull rumble of thunder. Mathias looked up and dropped the book on the table.

"No attacks tonight. Hurry up."

Lovino, Natalia and Gilbert all recoiled upon hearing they were expected to read the book.

"Wait, you mean read?"

"While we're still alive?"

"Why read words when you can just kill the stuff the words tell you stuff about? That's not awesome."

Toris spoke up in excitement.

"Oh, I've read it like, seven times. There's this water dragon that shoots boiling water at your face, and there's this other one that..."

The three glowered at Toris.

"Yeah, maybe there was a chance I was gonna read that."

"But now..."

Gilbert got up.

"You guys waste time reading, the awesome me is gonna go kill stuff."

The other teens apart from Elizabeta began to file out the hall. Peter approached Elizabeta, hoping she'd consent to read the book with him.

"So I guess we'll share then?"

She gave him a look and pushed the book towards him with a look of disinterest.

"Read it."

Peter sagged a little as she got up and followed the others.

"Oh, all mine then, great, so I guess I'll see you..."

The doors slammed as Elizabeta left, leaving Peter by himself.

"...tomorrow."

He sighed and returned to his food, but he could find no real spark of hunger in him as he picked at his fish. After some time, there was nobody left in the hall apart from him. He brought two candles to the table with the book and opened it up, silently surprised at how much information there was in it.

"Dragon classifications. Strike class, fear class, mystery class."

He turned the page and read aloud.

"Thunderdrum. This reclusive dragon inhabits sea caves and dark tide pools. When startled, the Thunderdrum releases a concussive sound that can kill a man at close range. Extremely dangerous, kill on sight."

Turning the page, he saw an illustration of a huge dragon.

"Timberjack. This gigantic creature has razor sharp wings that can easily slice through full grown trees. Extremely dangerous, kill on sight."

He read on.

"Scauldron. Sprays scalding water at its' victims. Extremely dangerous..."

He yelped as there was a clap of thunder outside and lightning briefly lit the sky. Turning back to the book he carried on.

"Changewing. Even newly hatched dragons can spray acid. Kill on sight. Gronckle. Zippleback. The Skrill. Boneknapper. Whispering Death."

He turned page after page.

"Burns its victims, buries its victims, chokes its victims, turns its victims inside out. Extremely dangerous, extremely dangerous. Kill on sight, kill on sight, kill on sight."

Finally he reached the back of the book and the page he wanted.

"Night Fury. Speed, unknown. Size, unknown. The unholy offspring of lightning and death itself. Never engage this dragon. Your only chance; hide and pray it does not find you."

He took out his sketchbook and dropped it next to the Dragon Manual. It opened on the page showing his sketch of the downed Night

Fury.

4. Chapter 4

****How to Train your Nation****

****Chapter 4****

Three viking longboats skirted the edge of the fog blanket that hugged the area known as Hell Hind's Gate. Hamish studied a map of the known area around Berk and glared into the fog.

"I can almost smell them. They're close."

The captains of the other ships, Tino and Berwald, called to their crews to keep close to the chief's ship. Hamish spoke up.

"Take us in."

All three ships melted into the fog. Soon after, a fiery explosion lit up the fog bank and a Monstrous Nightmare roared.

Peter made his way to the arena, his mind full of questions about the mysterious Night Fury. Perhaps Mathias would know more. As he got to the arena, he could see that a maze of sorts had been put up. The other teens were already entering the arena, so he hurried to join them. Mathias lowered the gate and opened one of the pens. Out came a bird-like, blue Deadly Nadder. Giving a strange screech, it nimbly hopped up onto the nearest obstacle as Peter tried to speak to Mathias.

"You know, I noticed the book had nothing on Night Furies. Is there like, another book, a sequel, maybe a little Night Fury pamphlet or..."

A jet of fire blew the head of the axe off, alerting him to the possibility it may have been a better idea to ask about the dragon before he was in an arena with one.

"Focus Peter! You're not even trying! Today is all about attack. Nadders are quick and light on their feet. Your job is to be quicker and lighter."

Toris was suddenly confronted by the dragon. Several spikes were flung at the teen, who protected himself in the nick of time by raising his shield. Most missed him, but a few embedded themselves in his shield. He yelped and ran away from the dragon.

"I'm really beginning to question your teaching methods!"

Lovino and Natalia approached as Toris ran off.

"Look for its' blind spot. Every dragon has one. Find it, hide in it, and strike."

Unwittingly, the twins found themselves right in front of the dragon. Natalia pulled a face at a certain smell.

"Ugh, you've been eating old tomatoes again haven't you?"

Lovino looked unimpressed and shoved her back.

"You don't like it then get your own blind spot."

Natalia headbutted her brother.

"How about I give you one?!"

A screech from the dragon reminded the twins that they were still in training. A jet of whitish fire spewed forth but missed them both as they fled. Mathias grinned.

"Blind spot, yes. Deaf spot, not so much."

Running past, Peter paused to try again.

"So, how would one sneak up on a Night Fury?"

Mathias rubbed his brow.

"No-one's ever met one and lived to tell the tale, now _get in there!_"

Peter drew back slightly.

"I know, I know, but, hypothetically..."

"Peter!"

The scrawny teen turned to see Elizabeta and Gilbert squatting nearby. Elizabeta gestured for him to do the same, mouthing 'get down' to him as she did so. Around a corner came the Nadder, stalking the teens. Silently noting where its' blind spot was, Elizabeta and Gilbert managed to sneak past without being detected, but Peter accidentally banged his shield against the ground, alerting the bird-like dragon. Hopping up onto the barricades, the Nadder began to chase Peter again but ended up faced with Elizabeta and Gilbert. Raising her axe, Elizabeta made to try and scare the dragon off but was forestalled by Gilbert.

"Watch out babe, leave this to the awesome me!"

Gilbert flung his mace at the Nadder. The heavy weapon missed and clanged against the wooden barricade. The dragon gave a sniggering roar as Elizabeta gave Gilbert a withering look.

"Even the awesome me can't see with the sun in my eyes! Do you want me to block out the sun? I could do that because I'm awesome, but I don't have time right now..."

The Nadder charged at them. Separating, the dragon chose to chase Elizabeta, knocking over the barricades as they ran. Toris, Natalia and Lovino all fled from the collapsing obstacles. Gilbert did his best to avoid them, but Peter took the opportunity to try and question Mathias again.

"Has anyone ever seen one..."

"PETER!"

Peter turned to see Elizabeta scramble up a collapsing barricade, the Nadder hot on her heels as it charged for her. She yelled for him to move too late, and came falling towards him, her axe in hand. Peter was knocked over and heard a loud 'crunch' near to him. When the dust cleared a little, he could see Elizabeta's axe was embedded firmly in his shield, and Elizabeta herself was sprawled on top of him. Lovino wasted no time in mocking them.

"Ooo, love on the battlefield!"

Natalia chimed in, looking disinterested.

"She could do better."

Peter was flushing bright red as Elizabeta struggled to free her axe from his shield.

"I mean... couldn't you..."

Behind them, the Nadder pushed its way out of the wreckage and screeched. Elizabeta gasped and renewed her efforts to tug her axe free, despite putting her foot squarely in Peter's chest to do so, and then his face. As the dragon charged her again, she tugged both shield and axe free, spun around and belted the dragon around the head with the two weapons, shattering the shield and nearly knocking the dragon out to boot. Wincing, the dragon retreated into its' cage. Mathias spoke up.

"Well done Elizabeta."

Looking at her weapon, Elizabeta turned her ire on Peter.

"Is this some kind of a joke to you or something? Our parents' war is about to become ours."

She leveled the axe at him with a scowl.

"Figure out which side you're on."

Gilbert and Toris said nothing as Peter got up and left the ring. Lovino and Natalia had already left. Walking to the granary, Peter picked up a large fish and a shield that had been left on the ground. He belatedly remembered his dagger, untouched during the training session and still sheathed in his belt. He then ducked into the forest and headed for the cove where he'd seen the Night Fury last. Making his way between the rocks and roots of old trees, he held the shield first and cautiously looked into the cove. He threw the fish onto the ground, but no dragon appeared to devour his offering. Nervously he tried to enter the cove itself, but the shield got stuck and wouldn't budge. Ducking around it he tried to pull it free but without success. Sighing, he picked up the fish and looked around for where the dragon might be if it was still there. Unknown to him, the jet black Night Fury had been perched on a rock just above where he'd entered the cove, watching him the whole time. As he moved further in, the dragon kept its' slitted green eyes on him. Suddenly Peter noticed the Night Fury and gasped in surprise and shock, although more surprise that he hadn't noticed the dragon before. Snarling, the dragon made its way towards him, looking malicious but not openly hostile. Catching the scent of the fish, the Night Fury's eyes seemed

to change somehow, the pupils becoming rounder as it paused in front of him. Nervously, Peter held the fish out to the black dragon. Walking very strangely indeed, the dragon neared him, seeming almost like a curious puppy. Suddenly it paused and snarled again, catching the glint of Peter's dagger. Peter held the fish in his left hand and brushed back his jacket with the other, revealing the iron blade. The dragon snarled threateningly. Peter drew the dagger and dropped it away from him. The dragon made a gesture with its' head towards the water. Scooping the blade up with his foot, Peter threw it in the water. The dragon watched the blade sink, and then returned his full attention to the scrawny teen, sitting down attentively. Once again, Peter held out the fish. This time, the dragon crooned slightly as he cautiously advanced on him. Peter spoke in surprise as the dragon opened his mouth to eat the fish.

"Huh. Toothless. I could have sworn you had..."

Suddenly, two rows of white pointed teeth emerged from the pink gums and seized the fish. Swallowing it almost the way a bird would, the dragon licked his lips in satisfaction, leaving Peter very surprised.

"...teeth."

Licking his lips again, the dragon advanced on the viking teenager, his hunger still present and hopeful the boy had brought more than one. Peter backed away as the dragon seemed to hope for more.

"Uh, uh. No, no no no. I... I don't have any more."

Upon hearing this, the dragon seemed to consider something. Briefly his eyes looked in opposing directions as he began to look like he was choking. Peter watched in mingled fear and surprise as the Night Fury actually regurgitated half of the fish into his lap. Peter looked down in distaste.

"Ugh..."

The dragon seemed to rear back and actually sat on his haunches in a very human way. Breathing in shock, Peter sat up too, the half a fish still in his lap. The dragon looked at him in a peculiar way, almost as if he was pleased with coughing up a fish. For a long time, the two stared at one another, Peter silently confused by the dragon actually giving up half its food to him in such a way. Deciding to give the viking teen a clue, the Night Fury looked down at the fish half in Peter's lap. Peter looked down too, sighed in resignation, and took a bite out of the raw, regurgitated fish. He tried to fake pleasure at its' taste, and re-offered the fish to the dragon. Still with an almost smile on his face, the dragon mimicked swallowing. Peter gave the dragon an incredulous look and swallowed the mouthful of fish, trying not to be sick in the process. The dragon looked pleased and licked his lips briefly. Peter smiled in response, silently wondering if he was about to throw up. The dragon looked at the expression on Peter's face and did his utmost to mimic it, to the teen's amazement. He started to get up, reaching a hand out to the black dragon. Not interested, the Night Fury gave a warning growl before lopsidedly flying to the other side of the cove, onto a slight rise covered with grass. Shaking his head, the dragon breathed fire onto the ground and paced in a circle. Stamping out the flames, he looked pleased and lay down to rest. A bird on its' nest above

tweeted, catching his attention. As it flew away, the dragon watched it go, before realising that Peter had followed him and was sat nearby. The viking teen raised a hand in greeting, but the dragon simply began to make himself comfortable with a surly expression, which if translated into words, had a very clear flavour of 'Whatever' to the boy. As he curled his tail around, pointedly avoiding looking at Peter, the teen edged closer and tried once again to touch the dragon. Raising his tail before the boy made contact, the Night Fury gave the boy a withering, exasperated look, prompting him to get up and leave, aware he was annoying the dragon. Almost seeming to roll his eyes, the dragon got up too, and began to scale a nearby tree to sleep upside down. Peter sat down on a rock and began to mull over what he'd seen and experienced that afternoon as the dragon slept.

It was nearly sunset by the time the Night Fury woke up again. Yawning a little, he soon saw that the boy was still there, his back to him. He ambled over to the scrawny teen and soon saw he was sketching in the dirt. Watching, the dragon followed every movement Peter made with his stick, until the youth had done a rough but accurate sketch of the dragon's facial features. Crooning, the Night Fury got up and tore a branch off a tree. Bewildered, Peter looked as the dragon began to make a maze of squiggles all around him. Peter got up and tried to walk out of the maze, stepping on one of the lines in the process. The Night Fury snarled warningly, making him stand still. Lifting his foot up, the dragon soon returned to his calm, gentle appearance. Deciding to test the dragon, Peter put his foot down on the line again. Again, the dragon snarled, but as soon as he lifted it up, the dragon returned to his calm demeanour. Placing his foot where the ground was smooth did not provoke a reaction beyond the dragon's crooning. Smiling, Peter made his way through the maze, not once stepping on the lines. He was so engrossed in the task that he didn't notice where he was going, and abruptly realised he was mere feet from the Night Fury. He felt it exhale onto him and looked up in surprise. The dragon almost seemed to nod at him as he looked back at the teen. Curiosity overwhelmed him, and he reached out to touch the dragon yet again. Still wary of ulterior motives and unsure of how trustworthy the boy really was, the dragon snarled gently, but soon returned to a quiet visage when Peter lowered his hand. Looking down, away from the dragon, Peter held his arm out, only a foot or so short of touching the dragon, hoping the dragon would grant his silent request. The Night Fury watched as the teen extended his arm to him, and studied it curiously. He hesitated before leaning into the boy's touch, eyes closed. Peter looked up in amazement as the dragon opened his eyes again. Snorting softly, the dragon scurried off to the other side of the cove. Peter looked around before making his way out of the rocky cove and back to the village. As he got back, Toris waved to him from up at a campfire the others and Mathias had made up by one of the catapults. Peter followed the bulkier teen and joined them, although none of the other teens said so much as a word as he skewered a fish on a stick and held it over the fire to roast. Mathias had an entire chicken on a spit in place of his missing arm, and the others had significantly larger portions than Peter did. For a while they made small talk before their food was cooked, and then they began to eat. Gilbert spoke up.

"So how did you lose your arm anyway?"

There was a silence over the campfire. Mathias broke the silence with

a tale of his.

"It wasn't long after Snoggletog many years ago that we had an attack by a flock of dragons. All of you were just toddlers. I was fighting a Monstrous Nightmare when I got too close. I hit him around the snout with a hammer that had a rotten handle. The hammer broke, and with one twist, he took my hand and swallowed it whole. And I saw the look in his face; I was delicious! He must have passed the word, because it wasn't a month before another one of them took my leg."

The teens all gasped in awe at the tale except for Peter, who was quietly keeping an ear out for more information on dragon habits. Toris spoke up.

"Isn't it weird to think that your hand was inside of a dragon. Like if your mind was still in control of it, you could have killed the dragon from inside by, crushing his heart, or something."

Gilbert, Natalia, Lovino and Elizabeta all gave Toris strange looks. Gilbert was the first to speak.

"I swear, I'm so ANGRY right now! I'll avenge your beautiful hand AND your beautiful foot! I'll chop off the legs of every dragon I fight, with my awesome face."

Mathias shook his head.

"No, it's the wings and the tails you really want. If it can't fly, it can't get away. A downed dragon is a dead dragon."

Peter perked up, listening closely to the blacksmith. Mathias yawned widely.

"Alright, I'm off to bed. You shouldn't be long too. Tomorrow we get to the big boys. Slowly but surely working our way up to the Monstrous Nightmare. But who will win the honour of killing it?"

Lovino put his food down with a smug grin. Unseen by the others, Peter left.

"It's gonna be me, it's my destiny! See?"

He showed the others an obscure marking on his left. Toris gasped.

"You had a tattoo?"

"It's not a tattoo, it's a birthmark. Means I'm born to be great."

Gilbert and Toris looked awed. Elizabeta looked indifferent. Natalia spoke up.

"I've been stuck with you since birth, and that was never there."

"Yes it was! You've just never seen me from the left side until now."

The twins began to bicker, joined by Gilbert and Toris. Elizabeta watched curiously as Peter made his way down, but soon ignored the teen in favour of her food and a few tales of her own.

"Well I almost managed to kill a Zippleback three weeks ago. I hit one head with my axe, and it must have seen me as a real threat, because it scrambled over itself to get away."

Mathias walked to his home, quietly thoughtful. It was nearly midnight when the other teens were asleep, but Peter was hard at work in the smithy. Drawing a new tailfin on his illustration of the Night Fury, he set about building an artificial one. Despite his talent for trouble, he had an equally strong talent for creativity. He drew a rough sketch of the larger tailfin and began to make the metal rods to hold everything together. Webbed together with strong, sturdy leather, he soon had a functional alternative fin made in less than an hour. Exhausted from his long day, it was all the teen could do to stagger home and sleep.

End
file.